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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SANAA 002129

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/03/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [OVIP](#) [KMPI](#) [YM](#) [KMCC](#) [KWAC](#) [ECON](#) [COM](#) [COUNTER](#) [TERRORISM](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES ANTI-CORRUPTION EFFORTS,
SALEH VISIT WITH FM QIRBI

REF: A. SANAA 1919

[B](#). SANAA 93

[C](#). SANAA 37

[D](#). SANAA 2095

[E](#). SANAA 2123

Classified By: Ambassador Thomas C. Krajewski for reasons 1.4 b and d.

[1](#). (C) Summary. On August 3 Ambassador discussed the aftermath of the oil price hikes and next steps for ROYG economic reform and anti-corruption with Foreign Minister Qirbi. Discussions also focused on the return of Yemeni detainees from GTMO and Saleh's November meeting with President Bush. End Summary.

Riots are Over...But What's Next?

[2](#). (C) Qirbi said the violent reaction to price hikes in oil products following partial lifting of subsidies in July was "all over, hopefully." Ambassador reiterated U.S. support for the ROYG in implementing of IMF-WB recommended economic reforms, but suggested that the reaction might have been more measured if the ROYG had explained to the public the reasons for and the benefits of reforms, and had introduced the anti-corruption measures Parliament called for when it passed the reform package in January (refs A and B). The FM replied that once Saleh had reached an agreement with leading businessmen on the General Sales Tax (GST), PM Bajammal did in fact meet with Parliament and opposition parties to explain the reforms (ref C). Strong negative reaction from the public was expected, continued Qirbi, but the eruption of uncontrolled violence was worrisome and counter productive. "We are in the process of investigating the instigators," added the FM.

Fighting Corruption

[3](#). (C) Ambassador suggested to the FM that ROYG failure to formulate a program to seriously take on corruption contributed to last month's internal discontent. (Note: DFM Noman said as much to DCM on August 2, commenting that public distrust of the government led the public to question how an increase in public revenues would benefit them (ref D). End Note). Ambassador said he hoped the ROYG would take advantage of the MCC Threshold program to make concrete progress, pointing to the draft plan's focus on fighting corruption through building an independent judiciary and creating a national land registry. Qirbi agreed on the central importance of fighting corruption, adding that a credible judiciary was of "paramount importance."

[4](#). (C) The only way Yemen can succeed against corruption, Qirbi told Ambassador, is through an implementation process that includes the government, NGOs, and opposition parties working together without the influence of political agendas. "It will take an effort of national unity," said the FM.

Yemeni GTMO Returnees

[5](#). (C) Ambassador raised ROYG reluctance to accept the return of Yemeni GTMO detainees unless they are designated non-enemy combatants. Ambassador assured the FM that the U.S. considered the decision of whether or not these individuals are ultimately freed or prosecuted entirely a ROYG one. He suggested, however, that if the security services shared the results of their investigations and the Attorney General's Office their reasons for releasing or prosecuting with the USG, it would lessen the likelihood of a negative USG reaction to potential releases. Qirbi replied that as the returnees' cases would be handled according to Yemen laws and Constitution, he saw no obstacles to sharing this information.

Saleh Visit

[6](#). (C) Ambassador and Foreign Minister discussed beginning preparations for President Saleh's November meeting with

President Bush. Qirbi said he hoped to reschedule his meeting with the Secretary before Saleh's trip, and mentioned that he routinely travels during Ramadan. Ambassador agreed it would be important for him to visit Washington in advance of Saleh's trip, focusing on the key issues of CT and security cooperation and economic and democratic reforms. Pointing to Saleh's intention to pass a list of his priorities in the next week or so (ref D), Ambassador highlighted that if the U.S.-Yemen relationship is to move to the next level, both sides need to understand what that entails. A major part of this equation, continued Ambassador, is a genuine relationship of trust in intelligence cooperation and sharing.

Comment: GTMO

17. (C) Qirbi did not raise the same objections to accepting the return of seven GTMO detainees as Noman had the previous day (ref E). On August 2 Vice President Abd Rabbu Mansour stated "The U.S. must hand over Guantanamo prisoners to their countries where they can be tried under local laws. We will try them just as we did those we caught in Yemen." It is not rare for ROYG officials to make conflicting policy statements, it appears, however, that the ROYG may be close to arranging for the return of prisoners from GTMO. End Comment.
Krajeski